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MALTA.

By Consul Wilbur Keblinger, Valetta.

The generally prosperous condition of the Maltese, resulting from the expenditure of large sums of money in the islands by the British Government, continued throughout 1916.

Maltese merchants were able to keep their stocks nearly up to normal during 1916. The increased population of the island, together with a considerable floating population, created a demand, however, which the merchants found difficult to supply regularly in all lines. The constantly increasing cost of water transportation and insurance of goods caused the cost of living to be always on a rising scale, and rendered existence difficult for people working on a fixed compensation and not participating in the general prosperity.

The statistics given in this report covering imports and exports are for the calendar year 1916. Heretofore statistics were available only for the Malta Government fiscal year running from April 1 to March 31, and for that reason the figures for 1916 have to be compared with those for the fiscal year 1914–15. In the future it is believed that statistics for the calendar year will always be obtainable.

The total imports into Malta during 1916 amounted to $16,744,688, showing an increase of $6,671,924 over 1914–15. This increase is quite general among all imports and was caused by the increased purchasing power of a majority of the native population and by the trade of a large temporary population. The exports amounted to $2,633,974, a decrease of $1,852,447, caused principally by the Government prohibition of exportation of potatoes and onions.

Chief Articles Imported.

The following table gives the value of the principal articles imported into Malta in 1914–15 and 1916:

Articles.	1914–15	1916	Articles.	1914–15	1916
Beans	$179,846	$358,387	Lard	$131,405	$157,401
Beef, mutton, and other meats	226,784	34,532	Manufactured articles unenumerated	131,624	217,322
Beer	150,126	278,947	Metals, and manufactures thereof	248,011	54,368
Bullocks	351,327	212,835	Petroleum	212,174	973,110
Butter	170,498	332,770	Soap	184,796	287,940
Cheese	210,500	285,731	Spirits	139,975	411,408
Coal	1,229,238	1,882,532	Sugar	469,982	722,135
Cotton goods	412,961	590,097	Tea	61,191	136,773
Cottonseed oil	122,942	212,689	Tobacco, unmanufactured	107,598	136,374
Drugs, chemicals, and apothecaries' ware	56,193	101,378	Wine in casks up to 15°	406,513	428,660
Fish, fresh and preserved	190,494	304,335	Wood and timber	62,247	31,413
Flour and semola	736,540	816,000	Yarn	92,312	75,440
Fruit, fresh and preserved	137,498	308,119			
Grain: Wheat	1,134,955	1,705,469			

Increase in Imports from the United States.

The imports into Malta from the United States during 1916 amounted to $1,936,555, showing an increase of $1,028,459 over the fiscal year 1914–15. This gain was due to the unprecedented importation of wheat and petroleum, these two items alone showing an increase of $1,168,014. Steamers were usually chartered to carry these two products direct from the United States to Malta. All other importations, principally foodstuffs, were transshipped through England and sometimes Italy. Direct importation under present conditions, except on cargo lots of wheat and petroleum, is quite out of the question. Transshipment of American goods at English and Italian ports is difficult, as the war regulations in those countries prohibit the reexportation unless the goods are brought in on neutral vessels. Usually the Maltese merchant is advised by his American correspondent that he can not make delivery either on account of lack of transportation facilities or because his factory is filled with other orders for an indefinite period. Under such conditions it is futile to attempt to extend American trade in the islands. If trade opportunities are sent in at the request of Malta merchants and no results are obtained, there will be less chance for trade extension in the future.

The following table gives the value of imports into Malta from the United States:

Articles.	1914–15	1916	Articles.	1914–15	1916
Beef	$5	.....	Other meats	$3,484	$4,146
Books and stationery	.....	$126	Refuse grain	438	550
Boots and shoes	1,450	3,645	Spirits	1,246	6,288
Coal, coke, etc	40,878	6,063	Sugar	12,010	5,173
Cotton goods	238	365	Tobacco:		
Cottonseed oil	49,803	4,321	Manufactured	881	6,579
Fish	2,559	569	Unmanufactured	17,193	7,699
Flour	65,902	.....	Tools	.....	151
Hardware	452	1,766	Wax	.....	608
Lard	68,437	75,537	Wheat	493,424	1,013,804
Machinery	107	1,109	Wine in bottles, still, over 15°	97	.....
Manufactured goods unenumerated	510	1,586	Wood and timber	730	.....
Oil:			Total	908,096	1,936,555
Petroleum	147,308	794,942			
Other	944	1,528			

Export Trade of Malta.

The value of the principal articles exported from Malta in 1914–15 and 1916 is shown in the following table:

Articles.	1914–15	1916	Articles.	1914–15	1916
Cheese	$31,899	$15,806	Onions	$151,552	$16,112
Cigars	12,954	15,996	Oranges	4,302	49
Coal	1,724,132	1,168,364	Other fruit and vegetables	6,384	9,641
Coffee	306	2,487	Potatoes	522,105	60,126
Cotton	5,761	13,689	Rags and by-products	8,983	24,882
Cotton goods	34,849	18,599	Spirits	15,130	102,989
Cumin seed	87,212	195,857	Sponges	2,155	.....
Fish, fresh and preserved	10,550	5,200	Tea	25,286	97,281
Flour and semola	10,535	3,183	Wine	14,185	1,363
Lard	311	.....	Tobacco: Cigarettes	101,243	290,856
Metal manufactures	43,404	22,624			

Exports to United States—Shipping Statistics.

The declared value of merchandise invoiced at Valetta for shipment to the United States during the year 1916, according to consular

records, was $19,513 against $7,929 during the fiscal year 1914–15. The following table shows the articles and their value for the two periods.

Articles.	1914–15	1916	Articles.	1914–15	1916
Cheese	$1,947		Rags	$937	
Cigarettes	459	$1,435	Squills		$1,229
Cumin seed		16,625	Sultana	998	
Elaterium		224	Total	7,929	19,513
Lace goods	459				
Old furniture	3,129				

The number and tonnage of steamers and sailing vessels that entered and cleared at the port of Malta during 1914–15 and 1915–16 were as follows:

Class and movement.	1914–15		1915–16	
	Number.	Tonnage.	Number.	Tonnage.
Steamers:				
Entered	1,701	3,824,906	1,028	2,346,474
Cleared	1,700	3,824,037	1,024	2,341,477
Sailing vessels:				
Entered	508	24,342	507	26,038
Cleared	504	28,730	477	24,578
Total entered	2,209	3,849,248	1,535	2,372,512
Total cleared	2,204	3,852,767	1,501	2,366,055

The nationality and tonnage of steamers that called at Malta during the years 1914–15 and 1915–16 were as follows:

Nationality.	Steamers.		Tonnage.	
	1914–15	1915–16	1914–15	1915–16
British	876	548	2,357,893	1,573,124
Austrian	186		194,384	
Dutch	51	26	66,173	30,268
French	133	145	342,025	385,620
German	195		518,445	
Hellenic	43	61	62,613	93,390
Italian	160	212	184,185	209,416
Other	57	36	99,188	54,656
Total foreign	825	480	1,467,013	773,350
Total British and foreign	1,701	1,028	3,824,906	2,346,474

There were 926 boats engaged in the fishing industry, and the number of people employed is estimated at 3,000. The average catch of fish per day is about 550 pounds.

Agricultural Conditions.

The total area of land under cultivation in Malta during the fiscal year April 1, 1915, to March 31, 1916, was 41,614 acres. Cereals were grown on 14,157 acres, against 13,816 acres during the previous year. The increase is explained by the contraction of area usually planted in potatoes and onions.

Potatoes were grown on 3,161 acres in 1915–16, against 3,673 acres in the preceding year. The importation of Irish seed potatoes commenced early in December, but subsequent consignments were delayed

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on account of high freight rates. The price was so high when put on this market they remained unsold, and it was necessary to export them to other Mediterranean ports. The exportation of the winter crop was prohibited by the Government until the middle of March, when permission was given for the exportation of quantities averaging 100 tons per week. Under this authority 1,500 tons were exported to the Regency of Tunis. The spring crop was much benefited by the weather, it being the first time in 24 years that there was no blight.

Onions were grown on 1,219 acres, against 1,703 acres in the previous year. The white variety of onions is mostly grown in Malta. The exportation during June and July was unrestricted, but in August exportation of red onions was prohibited in order to secure a stock for home consumption. The total number of tons exported was 3,326, against 3,916 in the previous year.

Cumin seed was grown on 2,597 acres, against 2,359 in the previous year.

Cotton was grown on 946 acres, against 1,006 acres during the previous year. The yield in lint cotton was 183,580 pounds, which sold at 14 cents per pound.

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